

## Researching Greek Surnames Using Translation vs. Transliteration

As you begin your Greek research, there are several things you need to know: the EXACT Greek name and proper spelling of your search person, their true date of birth, and true birth place. This article refers to the first of these things: knowing the EXACT Greek name and proper spelling of your ancestor.

As in all languages, letters and grouping together of letters makes different sounds. When you are looking through old documents, you need to know the transliterated spelling of your ancestor's name. Otherwise, you will not find it.

There is a difference between translation and transliteration.

Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language to another.

Transliteration is the process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another, one letter at a time. Transliteration changes the words from one language or alphabet into another corresponding, with similar-sounding letters with different characters.

Here's an example:

If the Greek surname you are looking for is "Dokos" (this is the Americanized version), in Greece it is spelled "Ntokos". It is pronounced "Dokos" but is spelled differently. So, if you are an American looking for the surname that sounds like "Dokos", you must look on records for the surname spelled "Ntokos".

Another example:

If the Greek surname you are looking for is "Balamis" (the Americanized version), in Greece it is spelled "Mpalamis". The "Mp" is pronounced "B". If you are an American looking for this surname you must search records for the "Mpalamis" spelling.

Another example:

If your surname is "Vourinakis", the proper Greek spelling is "Bourinakis" as there is no letter "V" in the Greek alphabet and the letter "B" is pronounced "V".

All records written in Greek will have this situation, so make sure you understand that you must search for your surnames with transliterated spelling!

Some surname examples, with Greek spelling, transliterated spelling, and Americanized version:

Αγγελης	Aggelis	Angelis
Καμπίτσας	Kampitsas	Kabitsas
Καταβουλάδας	Katabouladas	Katavouladas
Ευάγγελης	Euaggelis	Evangelis
Κακάβας	Kakabas	Kakavas
Ντόβας	Ntovas	Dovas